

In those days... ^{Luke 2:1} God's people were occupied by a foreign government...
and it had been on account of their disobedience.

And so God sent a deliverer... but unlike many before him, his call didn't come as an adult.

In fact, it was before he was even conceived and born.

An angel came and announced his birth, first to his mother saying,

Behold... you shall conceive and bear a son... ^{Judges 13:3}

and he shall ... save Israel... ^{Judges 13:5}

He was to be set apart from the womb for his life's mission.

He was to be clean **from the womb to the day of his death.** ^{Judges 13:7}

His mother told the news to her husband and you can bet that he prayed about it because
the same angel came and spoke to him... the same message as to his mother.

...

It was a miraculous conception; his mother had never conceived before,
but it happened just as the angel had said it would...

And the woman bore a son... ^{Judges 13:24}

The husband and mother beheld the face of God... and miraculously lived. ^{Judges 13:22-23}

And, we are told that the young man grew, and the Lord blessed him. ^{Judges 13:24}

And the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him. ^{Judges 13:25}

His life was not an easy one.

He took on the sins of those around him. He was continually tempted with strong temptations.

He performed many miraculous feats, as the Lord was with him...

his first one even came on the occasion of a wedding. ^{Judges 14:6}

He had spent his life constantly... and singlehandedly... fighting against the enemy. ^{Judges 14:13}

His own people disowned him. They wouldn't kill him themselves but gave him up to their enemies,

Finally, he was betrayed by one who supposedly loved him... for a price, ^{Judges 16} their oppressors.

and he was bound and led away. ^{Judges 16}

His last moments were spent being mocked. He looked so weak and vulnerable.

He appeared forsaken by the one true God, but called upon Him in faith one last time none-the-less.

He prayed, **"O Lord God, please remember me."** ^{Judges 16:28}

And he died with his head bowed and his hands outstretched...

And he defeated the enemies of God's people more so in his death than during his life.

And he was taken from the place of his death and buried by his loved ones.

From his conception and birth to his suffering, death, and burial, Samson was the Lord's servant,
sent to deliver God's people from the hands of their enemies.

But that deliverance was only temporary: it only saved them from their worldly oppressors;

it did not atone for their rebellion against God, nor give them new life in obedience to God.

For this, there is only one Deliverer, Jesus Christ; His miraculous birth celebrated on this day.

Though He came in t/weakness of human flesh, the Holy Spirit was w/ Him in power mighty to save.

So, Come, All Ye Faithful, let us rise together and sing our Exordium Hymn, #142 - Rejoice, Rejoice

This Happy Morn

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Dear Fellow Redeemed, A merry Christ-mass to you!

I am sure you have at least heard, if not thought or spoken the sentiment:
that our society needs to put Christ back in Christmas.

We might use this phrase when considering the various popular ideas society has re: Christmas:
how commercialized it is, how all the secular "Christmas music" waxes poetic
about brisk, white seasonal weather or about a very worldly concept of peace, comfort, and joy.

Sadly, it is even reported that there are Christian congregations who are voluntarily taking today off
on this Lord's Day from gathering together around Word and Sacrament,
in favor of their own "family & friends" gatherings and fellowship.

But know that ours is not the first generation that has lamented a Christ-less Christmas.

In the ancient Church, during the 3rd Century, as Christmas was becoming more universally celebrated,
Jesus' divinity came into dispute.

Arius, a bishop in Alexandria, Egypt in the early 300s, championed an idea about God
that would have gutted the Christian faith and comfort.

In response, the Church took to Scripture and found our text to be most helpful in refuting Arius
when they wrote the Nicene Creed as their confession of faith and response to his heresy.

Listen again to a few portions of our text from St. John recorded in 1:1-14.

As follows in Jesus' name:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in
the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing
made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the
darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ...

The true Light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and
the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His
own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He
gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh
nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the
only[-begotten of] ~~Son from~~ the Father, full of grace and truth. ^(ESV)

*This is Your Word, heavenly Father; **sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth.** Amen. (John 17:17)*

Did you notice how many of the items that you confessed in the Nicene Creed were expressed here?

One of those key words and phrases that first popped out to me was "Light of Light."

as when St. John talks about Jesus being **the true Light of men, shining in the darkness.**

Another one was when we confess that Jesus is *the only-begotten Son of God*,

Begotten of His Father before all worlds, ... Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father.

and St. John here speaks of Jesus having **glory as of the only-begotten of the Father.**

And the more deeply you compare our text to the Nicene Creed,

the more you see that the Nicene Fathers really did take their confession from St. John's first 14 verses.

And it shouldn't really be too surprising to us because St. John is reported to have written his Gospel

partly in response to another heretic named Cerinthus, who also tried taking Christ out of Christmas.

Simplifying things, Arius got hung up on that word “begotten.”

(Which is really the only word that the Lord uses to describe the Son’s relation to the Father.)

Arius taught that, just like one might say that Cain was “man of man” begotten from Adam, so the Son was “god of God” begotten from the Father.

So he taught that the Son had a beginning, that He was the first thing that the Father created or made.

Except that one of the essential characteristics of the divine nature of God is that He is an eternal being. His divine nature cannot be created or made.

So that if the Son were truly & essentially God as St. John reports, (**and the Word was God**) He could not be created or made.

When, in Psalm 2[:7], the Father declared, “**You are My Son; today I have begotten You,**”

The Father is not talking of any one specific date or created day,

but of the eternal day that He alone lives in, the “day” that has no beginning or end like Him.

St. John takes up this same “begotten” terminology, when he says that Jesus’ glory was “**as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.**”

And that is really the comfort for us, too:

that Jesus (the eternal Word, that has now taken on flesh to dwell among us) is full of the same divine grace & truth as the Father.

And the will of the Father and the Son is the same, your salvation, to give you Christ’s **life and light.**

And the way that the Father gives you life and light is by giving you His Son, Jesus Christ, not just 2,000 years ago, as a little babe, but also as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world.

This is so important because Cerinthus and Arius aren’t the only ones with difficulty believing and trusting in the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

As St. John points out, Jesus, the Light of the World **was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him.**

Because we are “man of man” born in the fallen image of Adam, we were numbered among the **world that did not know Him.**

That you are a child of God is not based upon your own will or decision or goodness, but, as St. John says, **those who believed in His name, ...were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.**

The same darkness that plagued Cerinthus and Arius, plagues us.

The same temptation to take Christ out of Christmas and focus on the gifts, the sales, the holiday cheer, the relaxation, the family and friends, and so forth, abides in each one of us.

We have the same temptation to make the Son of God into whatever we want Him to be.

And so it is all the more important that Christ remain in Christmas.

That we hear the eternal Word spoken to us, to give us spiritual life and light, so that the darkness of our inherited natures may be overpowered by the Word-made-flesh, so that you may receive Him and believe in His name, and be a child of God, born of God.

But let us also not forget about keeping the mass in Christ-mass, either.

As the Word became flesh and dwelt among us 2,000 years ago to live and die for your forgiveness,
so the Word still would come to you today with His same flesh and blood to dwell in you
so that you might live and die in His forgiveness.

While we can enjoy the Lord's gifts of family and friends, festive cheer,

and even the societal peace comparable to the *Pax Romana*,

Having the true Christ, Son of God and Mary's Son,

as the sole focus and comfort of your Christmas celebrations, will give you a lasting peace,
the *Pax Domini*, the Peace of the Lord to go with you this Feast day, season, year, and life
until you enter the eternal day with our Lord as His glorious child.

Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men. Luke 2:14

Soli Deo Gloria